

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 3280

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO SECDEF

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: MPOL YO UR US

SUBJECT: SELECTED SOVIET PERSONNEL IN YUGOSLAVIA TO
PREPARE NEW EQUIPMENT

REF: BELGRADE 2205

1. DURING INITIAL CALL, JNA CHIEF OF STAFF GEN. STANE
POTOCAR AFFIRMED TO NEWLY-ARRIVED DATT PRESENCE OF SOVIET
TECHNICIANS IN YUGOSLAVIA TO RECEIVE AND PREPARE JNA'S
NEWLY ACQUIRED SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

2. POTOCAR'S STATEMENT WAS MADE IN CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED
CONTEXT: HE SAID HE COULD HIMSELF TELL DATT THAT
YUGOSLAVIA IS IN NO WAY ALLIED WITH EITHER EAST OR WEST.
DESPITE RUMORS TO THE CONTRARY ABOUT PRESENCE OF RUSSIAN
BATTALIONS HERE, HE COULD SAY THAT THERE ARE NOT AND NEVER
HAVE BEEN, INCLUDING DURING YOM KIPPUR WAR, ANY SOVIET
COMBAT TROOPS IN YUGOSLAVIA. HE OFFERED TO MAKE IT
POSSIBLE FOR DATT TO VISIT ANY SITE IN YUGOSLAVIA TO
DISPEL UNFOUNDED RUMORS. POTOCAR ADDED THAT HE HAD
HEARD ABOUT RUMORS CIRCULATING AMONG MILITARY ATTACHES
THAT THERE ARE SOVIETS AT TIVAT ON YUGOSLAV COAST. HE
EXPLAINED THAT THEIR TEMPORARY PRESENCE THERE IS
REGULATED BY 1974 SHIP REPAIR LAW, UNDER TERMS OF WHICH
US NAVY COULD ALSO HAVE ITS SHIPS REPAIRED. THERE ARE
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PAGE 02 BELGRA 03280 270912Z

ALSO SOME SOVIET TECHNICIANS IN YUGOSLAVIA TO RECEIVE

AND PREPARE NEWLY ACQUIRED SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND TO INSTRUCT JNA IN ITS OPERATION, JUST AS US MAAG DID IN YUGOSLAVIA IN 1950S. NO ONE SAID THEN THAT YUGOSLAVS WERE ALLIED WITH AMERICANS, HE ADDED.

3. BULK OF CONVERSATION CONCERNED MILITARY SALES. POTOVAR REPEATED POINTS YUGOSLAVS MADE DURING AF SECRETARY MCLUCAS' VISIT ABOUT HIGH PRICES OF US EQUIPMENT AND DATT DISCUSSED WAYS HE COULD ASSIST JNA IN FACILITATING EXCHANGES WITH WASHINGTON. POTOVAR REITERATED THAT JNA DESIRES TO IMPROVE MILITARY RELATIONS WITH US AND SAID HIS PEOPLE WOULD WORK CLOSELY WITH MILITARY ATTACHES TO THAT END. ELSEWHERE IN CONVERSATION, POTOVAR SAID NEITHER EAST NOR WEST WILL BE ALLOWED TO HAVE MILITARY BASES IN YUGOSLAVIA.

4. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT SOVIET TECHNICIANS WOULD HAVE TO BE ON HAND TO ASSEMBLE AND MAKE EQUIPMENT READY FOR HANDOVER TO JNA, IT IS APPARENT THAT YUGOSLAVS ANTICIPATED THEIR PRESENCE MIGHT CONSTITUTE IMPEDIMENT IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. YUGOSLAVS MAY HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY CONCERNED THAT WE WOULD INTERPRET, OR HAVE INTERPRETED, THIS AS REFLECTION OF CHANGES IN THEIR BASIC POLICIES AND ORIENTATION, AND THAT THIS AFFECTED US WILLINGNESS TO SELL MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO GOY. FACT THAT POTOVAR, NORMALLY A RETICENT CONVERSATIONALIST, CONTINUED MEETING BEYOND ALLOTTED TIME KEEPING ROMANIAN CHIEF OF NAVY WAITING, FURTHER UNDERSCORES THAT THIS WAS NO CHANCE SLIP OF TONGUE. (AFTER MEETING POTOVAR'S CHIEF OF CABINET SAID IT WAS VERY UNUSUAL FOR GENERAL TO SPEAK SO FRANKLY ON FIRST INTRODUCTION.)

5. SINCE YUGOSLAVS HAVE OPENED SUBJECT, AMBASSADOR HAS ASKED FOR APPOINTMENT TO CALL ON SECDEF GEN. LJUBICIC TO ELICIT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.
SILBERMAN

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED SECDEF

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